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Almost invariably, in letters or phone conversations, friends ask, with a mixture of ^{sypathy,} incredulity and skepticism, "What do you do up there in the woods?". The question, asked the way it is, evokes a picture of all my good friends gathered around my grave, looking down in the general direction of my remains, and asking, "Charlie, what in hell are you doing down there." ~~To forestal any untimely rumors of my departure from the living world I have embarked on this message.~~ I live, I work, I play.

Our circumstances are interesting. We live in a house we, Sally and I built with our own hands, mostly without power tools or electricity over a period of ten years between 1947 and 1962. It began with lumber from an old barn which was located about 10 miles away. We paid for it with an honorarium from a speech I made. She bought the barn and I tore it down with the help of a youth group I was working with in Buffalo. Sally's mother encouraged us to build it on a ^{the 50 - 60 acres} piece of land she and her husband (Sally's Father) had purchased about 1925. Inie and Doctor Shearer had built a Sears Roebuck prefabricated house ^{on the property about 1928 in which} ~~where~~ the family lived during the Summer and until we built our house it was the only dwelling on the property. Built as a summer "camp", and upstate term for a rough summer shelter, we never intended to live in ^{our house} ~~it~~ year round. If I had ^{had some intention} I would have built it differently. From the ^{five} ~~three~~ we started out ^{being (Sally, Charles, Scoogie, Della, and} with our family seen increased to ^{eight (Dean, Tom, Myrtle, Grace, A. Bernard)} ~~five~~ and then to grandchildren and we had to add -- electricity, a bathroom, ^{and a real furnace} 4 bedrooms, running water.

Although we now have a kitchen, dining room, living room a room ~~for~~ Sally uses for a Studio, four bedrooms, all rooms are small and each room shows the marks of primitive construction. With our moving around (from Buffalo to Washington, to New York City to Chicago) So Wales became pretty much the center of our rather extended family life. All our children and grandchildren and Sallys brothers and sisters and neces and nephews have partly grown up here. The original house that Inie and Doctor Shearer, (We all ^{son} inlaws ~~that is~~ still refer to Augustus Shearer as Doctor Shearerm he died in 1943) built has been expanded twicem once with a large porch and later with an rather elegant living room, is used mostly as a guest house in Since Inies death in 1981 the summer. Inie also added a swimming pool for everyones use about 1965. In 1962 Sallys sister, Anne and her husband Vern Bell built a Summer house near us so in the Summer we have neighbors. But in the Winter we are somewhat isolated in a sence. We are about a thousand feet off a township road up a long one lane drive, through the woods and up a hill. Our house is situated on the east side of a narrow valley (short days because of the shadow of the hill and woods rising behind us) at the bottom of which is the Cazenovia Creek, a mostly shallow twenty foot wide stream named after and early sgent for the Holland Land company which surveyed and sold the land in thas part of New York State in the ear~~y~~ 1800s and late 1700s. We are about 25 miles from downtown Buffalo midway betwee~~d~~ East Aurora and Holland on Rt. 16. An expressway from Buffalo, Rt 400 end[^] about a mile and a half away.

Our woods, Inie deeded the property to her four children Del Pitkin, Sally Livermore, Anne Bell and David Shearer in 1957, is mostly, maple, beech, cherry, willow, pine ~~willow~~ some over 200 years old some planted 50 years ago by Dr. Shearer. Here and there are old apple trees from the time 80 to 100 years ago when this land was part of a farm and this hillside was an orchard.

The climate is moderate ranging from 50 to 90 degrees in the Summer and zero to 40 in the Winter with a few exceptional days on both the high side and the low side. The soil is fairly rich and the rain fall and snow fall somewhat high because of the lake effect from lake Erie. Two or three feet of snow on the ground is not unusual but we are rarely snowed in and floods in this valley are rare.

Now in this environment, although not hazardous or wild (the wildlife consists mostly of deer, squirrels, rabbits, woodchucks, racoons, fox, chipmunk, pheasants, occasional turkey, grouse woodpeckers etc, There is an occasional report of a bear that has wandered up from Pennsylvania, or a wolf, originally introduced in the Adirondacs to control the deer population) does require a considerable amount of work.

In the morning there is wood to be brought in to feed the fire in the stove and fires to be started in the fireplace, ashes to be carried out (they are great for the ice and packed snow on the driveway), snow to be cleared away sometimes

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from around the house (a man with a big four wheel drive truck plows the drive itself and I have a 10 hp snow blower for my part of the job.) Some times I help my nephew cut and split wood. We got about 20 cord out this fall and Winter split and stacked and covered to dry. To the post office ^{a mile away} for mail, breakfast and correspondence and bills. Read the Chicago Tribune (they usually arrive in batches of two or three at a time). after lunch I write and do community chores, work on the efforts to stop a highways extension through the valley, Kiwanis membership or community affairs project (Kiwanis is one of the major communication hubs in our town) go into Buffalo for various personal or business matters. Occasionally teach a class or lecture at local colleges and universities, visit people in the hospitals or help a neighbor, walk (not enough). On Sunday I get the New York times. In the Spring there is pruning and clearing and ordering for the garden, planting cultivating, weeding and finally harvesting and canning. There are family celebrations, birthdays, anniversaries, visits. In the Summer swimming twice a day. Sally spends a lot of time helping with our Grandchildren while our daughter does her chores around their horse farm looking after about 50 horse and breaking the young ones for the track training, teaching riding. They live about 15 miles away.

And house repairs, painting, gutters, roofing and some building, road work, grass cutting. Once a week I play cribbage and gin with friends, go to a fish fry, community meeting, Special excursions for things like

picking blueberries. We have good music all day on the radio and occasionally a tape for TV sent to us by our son in New York because we can't get educational T.V. here. He gave us a machine that enables us to see programs he records from the excellent things available in New York. I serve on a committee preparing ~~across~~ an international Community development exhibition in India next year (Institute of Cultural Affairs) which is bound to be exciting and great for the world. We both travel as much as we want. Sally to places like France and Spain etc. I to Chicago, Binghamton, Ithaca, Auburn, Geneva, Center Isle. I toil but I don't spin. We have enough money for our needs, healthy enough and I never want for something to do. I miss Chicago especially its neighborhoods, people I knew there. It does not disappoint me that they can all survive without me nor do I gloat that I can survive without Chicago. I'm a little upset that some friends think that if you're not being paid for something it's not real work. But the fact is that what I do does have economic value and managing my affairs is like earning money. I'm not snobbish about that